

News release

Transparency rules bringing benefits to firms and consumers

24 October 2023

New rules requiring law firms to proactively publish key price and service information are having a positive effect, [a new report has found](https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/year-three-evaluation-sra-transparency-rules/) [<https://rules.sra.org.uk/sra/research-publications/year-three-evaluation-sra-transparency-rules/>].

The SRA Transparency Rules help consumers make informed decisions and help firms attract new business according to the independent review prepared by researchers [Economic Insight](https://www.economic-insight.com/) [<https://www.economic-insight.com/>]. The research asked individual consumers and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) their views and looked at the three years since the reforms were introduced in November 2019.

The transparency rules require all SRA-regulated law firms to publish certain information on price, how services will be delivered and their complaints procedures on their website, or offline if they do not have a web presence. Firms with a website must also display the SRA clickable logo, which links visitors to confirmation that the firm is regulated and the protections they can therefore expect.

Key findings from the review included:

- More than half (55% of individuals and 60% of SMEs) who had recently engaged with a legal services provider reported comparing price and service information before selecting an individual provider.
- 55% of individuals and 61% of SMEs who compared costs and services of different legal services providers found it easy to do so using information available online, while 21% of individuals found it difficult to compare this information.
- More than half (55%) of individuals who visited a firm's website prior to instruction recalled seeing the SRA clickable logo (up from 15% in the one-year review) – with most stating it helped them understand the protection they would receive.

Paul Philip, SRA Chief Executive, said: 'We introduced the transparency rules because all the evidence showed neither the public nor small businesses had the information they needed. This review shows that's now changing, and we want to see that progress continue, increasing access to justice and boosting competition across the whole of the legal market.'

'We'll continue to monitor the effects of the rules going forward and our Board will consider whether and how we should enhance our requirements and the supporting resources that we provide to firms and consumers.'

The review did find scope to improve law firm compliance with the rules, and to encourage greater consumer awareness of and access to the information available.

While the vast majority of law firms surveyed declared they were compliant with the various elements of the transparency rules, only 42% said they were publishing all the required information.

Our own spot checks suggest that even among firms who declare they are complying, many are not meeting all the requirements of the rules. We are continuing work to check compliance levels, offering to support to firms where improvements need to be made, but taking action where they are wilfully failing to adhere.

Introducing the SRA Transparency Rules was part of a long-term reform programme that began in 2014, involving extensive engagement with the profession and consumers. It was also informed by the CMA's legal services market study of 2016.

The price requirements in the rules apply to conveyancing, some employment work (tribunal claims for unfair or wrongful dismissal), immigration (excluding asylum), probate, some motoring offences, business debt recovery (up to £100k), and licensing applications for business premises.

Economic Insights' research involved:

- Online surveys of 2,022 individual users of legal services and 1,021 small businesses
- In-depth interviews with 27 individuals and 29 small business owners/managers
- An online survey of 274 regulated law firms and 7 unregulated firms
- In-depth interviews with 13 regulated law firms

We have published further information and support on its website to help firms comply with the transparency rules, including templates. There's also a [guide for potential clients](https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/choosing/look-out-for-our-logo/) [https://rules.sra.org.uk/consumers/choosing/look-out-for-our-logo/] on what the SRA clickable logo will tell them.